

*Some Notes on Jaintiā History.*—By E. A. GAIT, I.C.S.

(With Plate XXIV)

[Read July, 1895.]

Although Jaintiā was an independent state up to 1835 A.D., its past history is almost a blank, and we know nothing of the causes which united the Syntengs under one ruler, while their neighbours and close congeners, the Khāsīs, preserved a democratic constitution, and remained split up into numerous petty states, nor of how the kings came under Hindū influence and eventually left the hills and settled down at Jaintiāpur in the plains tract north of the Surma river. Neither is it known how the tract in question, which contains a numerous Musalman population and extends to within a few miles of Sylhet town, came into their possession.

This piece of country, which is now known as the Jaintiā parganas and forms part of the Sylhet district, is at the present time being re-settled under my supervision, and the opportunity has been taken to piece together the few items of information regarding its ancient history which could be collected.

The materials which have been gathered are, however, very scanty; they consist of (1) traditions, (2) inscriptions on coins, (3) inscriptions on copper-plates (land grants), and (4) references in the *burañjis* of the Āhōms and in the *Vaṁṣāvalī* of Lakṣmī-nārāyaṇa.<sup>1</sup> The information under the first three heads has been obtained chiefly by Babu Giris Candra Dās, Assistant Settlement Officer, who has shown much industry and perseverance in pursuing his enquiries in the directions indicated to him.

#### *Coins.*

That the kings of Jaintiā had a mint at an early date is shown by the statement in the *Vaṁṣāvalī* of Lakṣmī-nārāyaṇa to the effect that

<sup>1</sup> See paper on the Koch Kings of Kāmarūpa.—*J. A. S. B.*, 1893, p. 268.

when Nara-nārāyaṇa defeated the Rājā of Jaintiā (a few years prior to 1565 A.D.), one of the conditions which he imposed on the defeated monarch was, that, in future, coins should not be struck in his own name, but that his capital only should be mentioned. This story may perhaps explain why so few Jaintiā coins bear the name of the king in whose reign they were struck, but are simply described as coins “of the most illustrious ruler of Jaintiāpur.”

Although there is thus reason to believe that coins were minted more than 270 years before the annexation of the country, it would seem that their use as a medium of exchange was never very extended. In a report submitted in 1835 A.D., by the Commissioner of Dacca (Mr. Lewis), it is said:

“It is needless to speculate on the fact that the rājā had a tolerably large sum of money in his possession, or that many of the Viṣayādārs have probably considerable hordes; the fact is indisputable that all the more weighty transactions of the community were effected without the help of any thing approaching to the same quantity of silver that circulates elsewhere. The labourer mostly satisfied the demand against him with labour, the producer with produce, and it would be just as reasonable to expect to find a supply of beaver hats or Saxon broadcloth as silver, in places when the general wants of the community have not been such as to demand a supply of these commodities.”

All rents in the time of the rājās were paid in kind, and one of the chief difficulties experienced by the early British administrators of the tract lay in the substitution of money rents for payment in kind.

The Jaintiā rupees were locally known as *kātrā ṭākā* from the fact that they bore the device of a sword on them. Unlike the coinage of the Āhōms, which was exceptionally pure, they were made of very debased metal, which was doubtless a result of the system under which the right to mint coins was sold by auction to the highest bidder. Two coins bearing date 1712 Çaka were sent in 1836 A.D. to the Assay Master, Calcutta, for analysis, and were found to contain respectively—

Silver	68 parts	and	Silver	87·5	
Copper	123	„	„	Copper	116·9
Zinc	47	„	„	Zinc	33·6
Other metals	2	„	„	Other metals	2
				—————	
				240	240

According to the Company's standard, the value of the first coin was reported to be 3 annas and that of the second 4 annas 9 pie.

With the exception of a few of more recent date, Jaintiā coins are

now exceedingly rare, and the only collection which I have come across is one found in the possession of an old man living at Jaintiā-puri rāj, the former capital. The following is a list of the coins in this collection with the inscriptions on them :

- (1) *Whole coin of 1591 Çaka.*  
*obverse.* Çr Çr Jayantāpura-purandarasya, Çākē 1591.  
*reverse.* Çr Çr Raghunātha-pāda-padma-parāyaṇasya (Plate XXIV, 8).
- (2) *Whole coin of 1592 Çaka.*  
*obv.* Çr Çr Jayantāpura-purandarasya Çākē 1592.  
*rev.* Çr Çr Çiva-carana-kamala-madhukarasya (Plate XXIV, 9).
- (3) *Whole coin of 1630 Çaka.*  
*obv.* Çr Çr Jayantāpura-purandarasya Çākē 1630.  
*rev.* Çr Çiva-carana-kamala-madhukarasya (Plate XXIV, 10).
- (4) *Whole coin of 1653 Çaka.*  
*obv.* Çr Çr Jayantāpura-purandarasya Çākē 1653.  
*rev.* Çr Çr Çiva-carana-kamala-madhukarasya (Plate XXIV, 11).
- (5) *Quarter coin of 1653 Çaka.*  
*obv.* Çr Çr Rājā Bara Guçāñ.  
*rev.* Siṅha Bāhādurasya 1653 (Plate XXIV, 12).
- (6) *Whole coin of 1696 Çaka.*  
*obv.* Çr Çr Jāyantāpura-purandarasya Çākē 1696.  
*rev.* Çr Çiva-carana-kamala-madhukarasya (Plate XXIV, 13).
- (7) *Whole coin of 1704 Çaka.*  
*obv.* As above, with date 1704 Çākē (Plate XXIV, 14).  
*rev.* As above.
- (8) *Whole coin of 1707 Çaka.*  
*obv.* As above, with date 1707 Çākē (Plate XXIV, 15).  
*rev.* As above.
- (9) *Whole coin of 1712 Çaka.*  
*obv.* As above, with date 1712 Çākē (Plate XXIV, 16).  
*rev.* As above.
- (10) *Quarter coin of 1712 Çaka.*  
*obv.* Çr Çr Rāma-siṅha-nṛpavarasya  
*rev.* Çākē 1712 (Plate XXIV, 17).

These coins have been purchased from the owner and sent to the Society. The interest attaching to them is less than it otherwise would be, owing to the fact already adverted to, that only two of them bear the name of the ruler under whose orders they were struck. These two furnish us with the following dates :—

Bara Guçāñ Siṅha 1653 Çaka

Rāma-siṅha 1712 Çaka.

I have not included in the above list one coin in the collection (Plate XXIV, 18) because it seems doubtful whether it is a Jaintiā Coin or not. The legend is as follows :

*obv.* Çr Çr *Jaya-simha-bhūpālasya Çākē* 1585.

*rev.* Çr Çr *Hara-gaurī-carāṇa-parāyaṇa.*

The character is very similar to that on the coins known to belong to Jaintiā, and the distinctive dagger or sword is engraved on the reverse. On the other hand there is no reference to Jaintiāpur and the legend on the reverse is not found on any of the known Jaintiā coins.

### *Copper Plates.*

Up to the present time, the following copper plates only have been collected :

#### (1) *Copper Plate, dated 1692 Çaka.*

This plate sets forth that the king, Baṛa Guçāñ Simha, having become a Sannyāsī, makes a grant of 192 *Kedars* of land to Lila Puri Svāmi, with the consent of his nephews and nieces, including his successor Chattra Simha, and in the presence of his Prime Minister, U. Maupnar Laskar and the Commander-in-Chief Māṇikya Rāy.

#### (2) *Copper Plate, dated 1710 Çaka.*

This recites a grant by Kāṣā Sati Dēvī, the consort of the above mentioned Baṛa Guçāñ, of plots of land aggregating 35 *hāls*<sup>1</sup> for the service of the image of the Goddess Kālī in the monastery of Lila Puri Sannyāsī. The grant was made with the concurrence of the princes and of the Rājā Vijaya-nārāyaṇa. On the reverse of this plate are recorded two more grants by the same queen in 1724 and 1725 Çaka, respectively.

#### (3) *Copper plate, dated 1720 Çaka.*

In this plate is set forth the grant by Rājā Rāma-simha of some land for the temple of Çiva which had been erected by him at Dhupi.

#### (4) *Copper plate, dated 1727 Çaka.*

This, like No. (2), records a grant by Kāsā Satī, widow of Baṛa Guçāñ, the donee being one Nityānanda, the Guru of Rājā Rāma-simha.

<sup>1</sup> In Cachar, the *hāl* is equivalent to 4·815 acres; in Jaintiā it is said to have been somewhat less. A *kedar* or *kiyar* is the twelfth part of a *hāl*. The term *hāl* occurs also in two old copper plates found in Sylhet some years ago and deciphered by the late Dr. Rājēndra Lāla Mitra.

(5) *Copper plate, dated 1735 Çaka.*

This is another grant by the same lady, with the consent of Rājā Rāma-simha, of some land for the worship of the idols of Vasudēva, Jagannātha and Bhūdhara.<sup>1</sup>

*The Jaintiā Kings.*

It is known that the Jaintiā Rājās were of Synteng or Khāsī descent, and that although they had long come under the influence of Hinduism, the Khāsī custom of descent through the female continued to the end.<sup>2</sup> But beyond this we know nothing definite. The old people still preserve a few traditions and profess to know the genealogy of their kings, and all we can hope to do is to test their scanty statements by comparing them with the few scraps of information furnished by the coins and copper plates mentioned above and by stray allusions in the annals of neighbouring states.

The names of the Jaintiā kings with the order in which they are said to have reigned are noted below.

- |                       |                               |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Parbat Rāy.        | 13. Pratāpa-simha.            |
| 2. Mājha Guçāñ.       | 14. Lakṣmi-nārāyaṇa.          |
| 3. Buṛha Parbat Rāy.  | 15. Rām-simha.                |
| 4. Baṛa Guçāñ.        | 16. Jaya-nārāyaṇa.            |
| 5. Vijaya Mānik.      | 17. Baṛa Guçāñ.               |
| 6. Pratāpa Rāy.       | 18. Chattra-simha.            |
| 7. Dhan Mānik.        | 19. Vijaya-nārāyaṇa.          |
| 8. Jasa Mānik.        | 20. Rāma-simha.               |
| 9. Sundar Rāy.        | 21. Indra-simha.              |
| 10. Chōṭa Parbat Rāy. | 22. Rājēndra-simha, until the |
| 11. Jasamanta Rāy.    | annexation in 1835 A.D.       |
| 12. Vāna-simha.       |                               |

Of the first six of these kings, tradition tells us nothing beyond their names, and there is no mention of them elsewhere. As regards Dhan Mānik, the seventh in the list, the Āhōm *burañjis* relate that he was at war with the Kachāris, whose king was named Bhīmbal, and that in order to enlist the Āhōms on his side, he sent to Pratāpa-simha, otherwise known as Çuçenpha, offering him his daughter in marriage,

<sup>1</sup> A curious feature about all these copper plates is that the seal at the top of them is almost identical with the device on the coins of the kings of Tipperah.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Commissioner of Dacca to the Board of Revenue, dated 13th Novr. 1835. From the first of the copper plates described above it will be seen that the Prime Minister in 1692 Çaka was not Hinduised, as he still bore a Khāsī name and used the distinctive Khasi prefix "U."

on condition that he fetched her *viâ* Sāt-gāō which lay in the Kachāir country. This was in 1535 Çaka (A.D. 1618). The Āhōm king accepted the offer, and the result was a war with the Kachāris. The Āhōm *burañjis* further state that in the course of the reign of the same king (Pratāpa-simha), Maṅgala Rājā of Ḍimuṛia submitted and became tributary to the Āhōms, in order to escape from the oppression of Jasa Mānik of Jaintiā, so that it may be concluded that Jasa Mānik was reigning some time between 1618 and 1639 A.D. (the date of Pratāpa's death), and was probably the successor of Dhan Mānik as stated by the people of Jaintiā. Local tradition has it that Jasa Mānik went to Koch Bihār and married a princess of the Koch family, and that when he returned he brought the image Jaintēçvarī with him.

Of the next five kings on the list, no record has so far been traced, but of Lakṣmī-nārāyaṇa we know that he was living in 1632 Çaka (1710 A.D.), as there is an inscription on the ruined palace at Jaintiā-purī rāj (the old capital) which bears that date, in which it is stated that Lakṣmī-nārāyaṇa was the king who caused the palace to be built.

The next reference is found in the *Āsām burañji* of Kāçināth Tāmuli Phukan, in which it is stated<sup>1</sup> that towards the close of his reign, Rudra-simha, who reigned from 1617 to 1636 Çaka, advanced as far as Mīcā Mukh in Nowgong on his way to invade Jaintiā, when the king Rāma-simha hastened to tender his submission.

The next king Jaya-nārāyaṇa has left no trace behind him, but of his successor, Baṛa Guçāñ, we have a coin dated 1653 Çaka and a copper plate dated 1692 Çaka. From the latter it appears that he abdicated the throne and became an ascetic in the year in which it was inscribed, while it may, perhaps, be assumed that the coin was struck in the year of his accession. If so, his dates will be from 1731 to 1770 A.D.

There is a tradition that this king and his sister Gaurī Kuarī were taken prisoners by the Sīm of Khyrim, but escaped by the aid of men sent by Amara-simha, Sīm of Cherrapuñji. It is said that the two villages at which they halted on their return journey to Jaintiā-purī rāj<sup>2</sup> were given to the Cherra Sīm by Baṛa Guçāñ as a reward for his services on this occasion; these villages are still held *lākhirāj* by his descendants.

The plate referred to above says that Chattra-simha was the successor of Baṛa Guçāñ, so 1692 Çaka may be taken as the date of his accession.

<sup>1</sup> *loc. cit.* p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Angajur and Fatehpur.

From the next copper plate, which bears date 1710 Çaka, it appears that Chattra-simha had by that time been succeeded by Vijaya-nārāyaṇa, who in his turn probably died in 1712 Çaka, which is the date found on the coin which bears the name of Rāma-simha. The copper plates show that Rāma-simha was still reigning in 1735 Çaka or 1813 A.D. Indra-simha who succeeded him died shortly before the annexation in 1835 A.D.

From the above it will be seen that the traditional genealogy of the 14th to the 22nd king is confirmed by the inscriptions, &c., which have been collected. The seventh and eighth kings are mentioned in Āhōm chronicles in the order in which they are placed by tradition, and the interval between the date when the eighth king was reigning (*cis* 1638 A.D.) and that of Lakṣmī-nārāyaṇa's inscription on the palace at Jaintiāpurī rāj (1710 A.D.) is about what would suffice for the reigns of the five intervening princes of whom no record has hitherto been found. There is therefore, fair reason for accepting the traditional genealogy as correct, so far at least, as the seventh and subsequent kings are concerned.

The story of the annexation of Jaintiā is told at sufficient length in Mackenzie's North-Eastern Frontier. It will suffice to mention here that it was due to the abduction of four British subjects as human sacrifices to Kālī.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This custom of offering human sacrifices was common amongst the Āhōms, Koches and Kachārīs, and will form the subject of a separate note later on.